As you probably know, this year I am celebrating my 50th anniversary of pronouncing my vows as a Sister of Notre Dame. I use the present tense (I am celebrating) rather than the past tense (I have celebrated) because I plan to celebrate this event for the full 365 days. Today I'd like to share with you six thoughts about this special anniversary in my life.

1) I made my vows on January 3, 1965. There were seven of us who pronounced our vows as we knelt around the altar in our chapel. Present at that Mass were other Sisters of Notre Dame. No one else. Family members and friends were not allowed to be present back in those days. I remember getting very emotional when I said my vows: “Eternal Triune God, I vow to thee...chastity, poverty, and obedience...” My voiced cracked a few times. At that moment, I glimpsed what I was really doing with my life. And I felt incredibly blessed.

2) Celebrating a Golden Jubilee is not celebrating an accomplishment. It is not saying, “Look what I have done! I’ve lasted 50 years!” No, celebrating a Golden Jubilee is (for me) an act of gratitude for the gift that has been given to me: 50 years living as a...
Sister of Notre Dame. It is saying, “Thank you, my dear and loving God, for this life I have been given.”

3) The theme of our celebration was a single word: *Rejoice*. One of the jubilarians, Sister Laura Wingert, designed our invitations: three daisies with the word Rejoice. Simply beautiful.

4) For the public celebration, I invited my family, including 91-year-old Uncle Hank, my Dad’s youngest brother. If you’ve been reading this blog for a long time, you might recall that I wrote about Uncle Hank’s World War II military service on Nov. 4, 2013. (You can find that post by typing in “Uncle Hank” in the box under “Search” to the right of this reflection.) I also invited all my cousins even though some of them live far away—in Georgia, Florida, and Idaho. But many were able to come. More than one commented how wonderful it was to see each other again NOT in a funeral home, but for a happy occasion.

5) I received all kinds of gifts for my jubilee: many prayers, beautiful cards, monetary gifts, gift cards, flowers, lunches out with friends, etc. I’m grateful for each one! But two gifts touched me in a special way. Tony (who was married to my cousin Dan who passed away a number of years ago at the age of 46) gave me a quart of fresh plump blueberries. She had picked them that morning in her own yard and put them in a quart box that she had decorated herself. Her gift was
unique and sweet! Another cousin, Sr. Margaret Mach, gave me the gift of honey bees! Through Heifer International, she donated a hive of bees in my name to a needy family. The card says that a beehive can be a boost not only to a family, but to a whole village.

6) At the time of an anniversary, we often look back and count some of the blessings we have received. I'm still counting mine. But a few of those blessings are these:

+ people: the sisters, family, friends, students, colleagues, novices, retreatants, and readers who have encouraged, supported, and inspired me throughout these 50 years

+ the ministries I've been privileged to serve in: teaching, formation, leadership, retreat work, writing

+ the dynamic growth I've seen and experienced within the last 50 years especially in these areas: liturgy, scripture, education, psychology, civil rights, the women's movement, science, medicine, technology, and ecology.

I'd like to close with these words from one of the cards I received. It is by Pat Willems, CSJ, and produced by www.MinistryOfTheArts.org: The colors of a sunrise... the love that you find in another's eyes... the hand that helps you up when you've fallen down... The changing of the seasons... laughter and smiles and birds that sing... tears that flow... The hope we cling to when the darkness comes... broken dreams, broken hearts... hearts that unite, a friendship born... Hands unafraid to reach... souls that touch... all is gift, my friend, all is gift from a loving God.

The song I've chosen is "Blessed Be Your Name" by Matt Redman. Here are two versions of the same song. The first one is with the lyrics (and cords). The second is
with beautiful nature pictures. Choose the one you prefer.

with lyrics and cords:

Matt Redman - Blessed Be Your Name (Lyrics An...

with nature pictures:
Does anything in this blog touch your heart today?

What has been your experience with celebrating anniversaries?

Did you like the song? Why or why not?

Tagged as: anniversaries, celebrating a golden jubilee, golden anniversaries, why we celebrate anniversaries
Emmett McMahon  July 27, 2015 at 1:56 am
Congrats on your 50 years. That is a life of giving your life to our Lord God and to us. Thank you so very much.

REPLY

Kathleen  July 27, 2015 at 6:03 am
Great song!! In light on an anniversary, I think it is wonderfully appropriate. Congrats on your anniversary Sr. Melannie.

Kathleen

REPLY

Janet Schaeffler, OP  July 27, 2015 at 9:10 am
Congratulations, Melannie, on your 50 years of commitment – of generous service and inspiration to many. Thanks for all you’ve given so many of us. Keep on celebrating.
Janet

REPLY

Jean Hartl  July 27, 2015 at 9:26 am
Sr. Melanie,
Blessings on you for those 365 days and on....

REPLY
Rita  July 27, 2015 at 9:49 am

Perfect song “Blessed be the name of the Lord” certainly we bless the Lord through and for you, Melanie. Thank you for sharing your thoughts, joys and prayers with us. Congratulations and Blessings to you on your 50th anniversary.

Georgia Auckly  July 27, 2015 at 9:55 am

Congratulations on your Jubilee Year. Thank you for all your inspired writings on this website and other reflections in Give Us This Day, etc. I also love the music suggestions you provide in Sunflower Seeds. May God continue to bless your life with His abundance!

Shirley Sahlfeld  July 27, 2015 at 9:57 am

Congratulations! You deserve to celebrate all year long! I love both songs but am partial to the one with the nature pictures. Thanks again for your blog; Sunflower Seeds.

Mary Schneider  July 27, 2015 at 9:57 am

Congratulations on your Golden day and life! Thank you, Sr Melannie, for the inspiring books and articles you have written for the good of my soul and others. God will definitely continue to bless you.

Mary
Barbie  July 27, 2015 at 10:59 am

Congratulations, Sister Melannie! I am grateful for your blog and your writings in Living Faith. They have enriched my spiritual development. God bless you!

Dorothy Janofsky  July 27, 2015 at 11:01 am

Congratulations Sister Melanie! Thank you for your insights and for sharing your thoughts with us. My Husband and I are married for 47 years and we look forward to celebrating our 50th. By the way did you know my first cousin Sister Catherine Gorman?

Ann  July 27, 2015 at 11:15 am

Dear Melannie,
May the blessings you have received during the past 50 years and more be multiplied many times over in the years to come !
Peac

Karen  July 27, 2015 at 12:49 pm

Congratulations on this milestone anniversary. You are so right to celebrate all 365 days (and then some, if you want, I won't tell). I was once challenged to write some advice to "my 20-year old self". It was truly thought provoking. So I
may speak for many of your regular readers in saying we would be so interested in a future Blog post “Sr. Melannie writes to her 20 year old self on the occasion of her Golden Jubilee”.

---

**Sue**  July 27, 2015 at 12:55 pm

Congratulations Sister Melannie on your “50” years of service to our Triune God! Thank you for helping to “sow the Word” with your Sunflower Seeds...God bless you!

---

**Skip Meadows**  July 27, 2015 at 1:12 pm

Wow, what a blessing you are to me today. I’m sitting here sobbing. I love the song with the nature images because I’m so visual. And I especially love you and all of the SND’s and I thank you for everything you do for the world...and me! Interacting with you has brought immeasurable blessings into my life.

I just re-read the mother-in-law thoughts from June 29 and they mean a lot to me because I think I will welcome two daughters-in-love this year. That is the term I also used for another daughter-in-law who disappointed us and caused a divorce a year ago. I think I am now ready to really forgive her and rekindle a relationship...because I really did love her. It will also facilitate the family relationship for the sake of my grandsons. Thank you for helping me with that!

---

**Catherine**  July 27, 2015 at 9:23 pm

Thank you, Skip, for this beautiful concept. I truly love my former daughter-in-law and welcome the chance to address her as my daughter-in-love.
Joy
July 27, 2015 at 1:25 pm
A Life well lived...Congratulations....... 

Julie
July 27, 2015 at 1:38 pm
Congratulations and Blessings to you on your 50th anniversary.

Nancy
July 27, 2015 at 1:47 pm
Dear Melannie: Big Special anniversaries should be celebrated the whole year! Many blessings to you for many years as you are a very special blessing to all of us. Especially this blog and your thoughts in the Daily Word! Nancy

Sister Lois Wedl, OSB
July 27, 2015 at 1:51 pm
Congratulations, dear Sister Melannie! Like you, when I celebrated my Golden Jubilee, I remember being so filled with Gratitude. I anticipated that it was going to be a special day; however, the beauty of the liturgy and the love of God, my community, family and friends was far more wonderful than I could have ever imagined. All I could say and think was: THANK YOU. And now, dear Melannie, I thank God for blessing you with so much goodness that overflows into the lives of so many of us. Joyfully and gratefully, Sister Lois– Saint Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, Minnesota
Fran Smith  July 27, 2015 at 2:12 pm

Sister Melanie,
Happy Golden to you. Many years ago I was one of your Freshman English students, and want you to know I am celebrating my Diamond Jubilee of my birth this year. Hopefully it will be as joyful as your Golden Jubilee. Enjoy your next 50 years, who knows!

REPLY

Patty  July 27, 2015 at 2:28 pm

Congratulations, Sister Melannie.

REPLY

maureen  July 27, 2015 at 3:32 pm

Congratulations again Melannie. Loved your blog. You can say it so well. Looking forward to continuing the celebration with you.
love,
Mo

REPLY

Cathy  July 27, 2015 at 4:46 pm

Sister Melannie, thank you for answering the call to sisterhood. You have touched my life and many, many others I am sure. Congratulations!
Joanne Bennardo  July 27, 2015 at 7:28 pm

Dear Sister Melannie,
I was drawn especially to the “blessings” paragraph of your reflection. It seems to have an Ignatian ring to it. Whether we ponder and pray over a 24-hour day, a year, a decade, or in your case, fifty years lived in the Lord, each of us is blessed beyond measure. May we thank God for life and the blessings He brings to it.

Continue to celebrate with Joy, Joanne

Mary Ann  July 27, 2015 at 7:36 pm

I am blessed to know you 47 years of your 50! God bless you with life in abundance!

Linda  July 27, 2015 at 8:35 pm

Bless you Sister Melanie in your 50th year as a SND. I too enjoy your writings in Living Faith and Living With Christ. Many nights your books are the last I read before bed. Since I dabble in photography, I liked the nature video. The words were enhanced by the beauty of God’s creation.

Catherine  July 27, 2015 at 9:27 pm

Bet you never knew the impact your vows would have of so many of us. Thank you for you ongoing commitment and service to the Lord. PS: every year on
our wedding anniversary, my husband and I say we renew our “contract” for another year. Glad you have made this renewal on yours for so many years. 😊

Joni Dugan  July 27, 2015 at 10:36 pm
Melanie — well said kiddo! Congrats on the 50th. Doesn’t seem possible!
We were up for Karen Somerville’s 70th bd and retirement party. It was great. Saw Judy Ostrowski — what a treat! Took a pic of all the SND’s that were there — it was great to see them all. I saw the magazine with all the jubilarians in it — wow. Great looking bunch — goldens are looking younger and younger! Hope all is going well for you! Take care and keep up the good work. I am back on your mailing list!!!! Thanks so much! Peace!

Stephanie  July 28, 2015 at 7:32 am
Warm congratulations on your 50th. I am grateful for your beautiful, heartfelt writings contained in Living Faith. Whenever I read one that speaks to me I look down to find you are the author! You have touched my heart and soul countless times with your pearls of wisdom. God bless you always.

JoAnn Haney, OSF  July 28, 2015 at 8:55 am
Dear Melanie, Loved your reflection on the Golden. I celebrated my year last year and also did it over the whole year. In some ways still celebrating. It was with deep gratitude that I looked on the year and all the wonders God blessed me with as with your reflections. Keep the ‘rejoice’ happening.
Peace and blessings. JoAnn
Kim Hollinger  July 28, 2015 at 10:52 am

Congradulations. Thank you for doing the Lords work

Pamela  July 28, 2015 at 1:11 pm

Sr. Melanie, Congratulations on your Golden Jubilee. I am thankful for you and the time I got to know you during one of your retreats. I’ll never forget the game we played where all of us ladies were running around determined to get this pretty little tote you were giving away. I ended up with it and always think of you when I see it. You have touched my life and given me inspiration. Thank you & God Bless.

Stephanie  July 28, 2015 at 10:05 pm

Congratulation and God bless you!!!
I love the song you chose for this blog entry. It is one of my favorite hymns we sing at Mass.
Thank you so much! I really enjoy your blog.

Joan  July 28, 2015 at 10:07 pm

Congratulations Sr. Melanie! Wishing you God’s continued Blessings. And, thank you for the opportunity to share your faith-filled “seeds”.
marylougallagher Pieczarka  July 29, 2015 at 11:45 am

BLESSED BE YOUR NAME!!!!
How appropriate for this BLESSED year of celebration AND ALL OF YOUR
previous 50 years for all of those God chose to Bless through you!

Kendall  July 30, 2015 at 7:53 am

God's blessings, thank you for sharing with us about your life and thereby
witnessing to God's grace, mightiness, mercy and love

Marian Finley  June 25, 2018 at 4:45 pm

Our sister is celebrating her 50 year jubilee and we would like to also give
her a family celebration. Do you have suggestions, ideas etc.? Thank you!
SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME WITNESS DAILY TO GOD'S GOODNESS AND PROVIDENT CARE.